**Civics**

Ms. Hopkins

Email: [Ahopkins@reg4.k12.ct.us](mailto:Ahopkins@reg4.ct.us)

Room 606 (block 3)

Website: http://mshopkinssocialstudies.wikispaces.com/

**Course Overview**

“Democracy is a verb.” ---Anon.

The American system of government is very unique. The United States is the world’s oldest existing democracy. For all its faults, our American system has been copied throughout much of the world and continues to stand as a shining example of freedom and equality. Therefore, it is a graduation requirement (and a law!) that all Connecticut students complete a course in Civics.

“Democracy” is a Greek term meaning “the people rule” (demos = ”the people” + kratos = “to rule”). Therefore, the role citizens play in a democracy is crucial. The famous Greek statesman Pericles once said, “We…do not call a man who takes no part in public life quiet or un-ambitious; we call such a man useless.” While we can debate the extent to which Pericles’s statement defines American democracy in the 21st Century, the concept he illustrates is clear and timeless. Civic participation is democracy and democracy is civic participation. The main goal of this course is to ultimately encourage active civic participation.

**Resources**

* The Center for Civic Education: Civics in Practice: Principles of Government and Economics. Holt and McDougall: Massing, FL. 2011.
* Various supplementary materials including newspapers, magazines, primary source readings, and documentary films

**Units**

**Foundations of Democracy:**

1. Foundations of Government and Citizenship (Chap. 1-2)
2. The Constitution and the Bill of Rights (Chap. 3-4)
3. Political Ideology, Political Parties, and Political Behavior (Chap. 10-11)

**The Structure of Government:**

1. The Three Branches of Government: The Legislative Branch (Chap. 5)
2. The Three Branches of Government: The Executive Branch, Elections, and the Federal Bureaucracy (Chap. 6)
3. The Three Branches of Government: The Judicial Branch and the Court System (Chap. 7)
4. State and Local Government (Chap. 8-9)
5. Political Culture and Public Policy Issues (Interest Groups and Lobbying, Economy, and the Media)

Although this is the general outline of units, there will be frequent discussions of current events throughout the course.

**Materials to bring with you to class every day:**

These materials should be used ONLY for Civics.

* 3-ring binder with at least 10 pages of loose-leaf paper
* Journal or spiral notebook
* Planner
* Pen or pencil, highlighter

Additional materials: covered textbook, notecards for vocabulary, binder dividers

**Academic expectations**

Each topic discussed in the course will be introduced over a one or two day period. The remaining days of the unit will consist of seminar discussions and debates, online research, simulations, and student presentations designed to facilitate understanding of important concepts. Students will practice critical thinking skills through news analysis and persuasive writing.

Student progress will be assessed in a variety of ways. Students will be expected to complete nightly homework assignments in preparation for class discussion. While homework completion is critical, the focus of evaluation in this course will be on more authentic assessments such as simulations, debates, analytical essays, and research projects. In addition, students are required to complete a current issues editorial (third quarter) & a *Civics in Action* project (fourth quarter).

Grading

First Quarter:

Homework and Classwork: 15%

Tests and Projects: 40%

Essays and Quizzes: 25%

Current Issues Research Paper: 20%

Second Quarter:

Homework and Classwork: 15%

Tests and Projects: 40%

Essays and Quizzes: 25%

Civics in Action Project: 20%

Course Grades:

First Quarter: 40%

Second Quarter: 40%

Midterm Exam: 10%

Final Exam: 10%

**Assignments**

Grading scale:

* 1. Check plus (90-100): Exceeds expectations in thoughtfulness and effort
  2. Check (80-89): Meets expectations; may have some problems
  3. Check minus (60-79): Does not meet expectations; assignment may be incomplete, inaccurate, etc. Revisions suggested.
  4. Zero: Missing substantial parts of the assignment, plagiarized, etc.

Participation, effort, and attitude will also be graded on an A-F scale regularly. No late homework will be accepted for full credit.

Attendance is essential to success in this course. If you have to be absent from class, it is your responsibility to collect missed work from your folder and to see me if you have questions. Ask a friend or study partner first. I**t is your responsibility to make up all missing work.** It is also your responsibility to reschedule a make-up exam, which must be completed no later than one week after returning to class to receive credit. **Extra credit opportunities** will be offered once a month upon request.

**General Classroom Rules**

* Student attendance and punctuality is a given
* Treat everyone in class with dignity and respect following the principles of common decency—the ability to work together and have civil discussions is particularly relevant in a civics class
* Be in your assigned seat when the bell rings and check the board for homework
* Bring all materials with you to class each day, including all prior handouts, homeworks, etc.
* Follow directions the first time they are given and follow all school rules and procedures

Please sign below to show that you understand and agree to the above course guidelines and expectations:

Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian email: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian preferred phone number: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Which is the best way to contact you?

\_\_\_\_\_\_ Email

\_\_\_\_\_\_ Phone

Do you have internet access at home? \_\_\_\_\_\_

Your First Assignment: DUE TOMORROW

1. Have your parent or guardian sign this syllabus
2. Cover your textbook and bring all materials with you to class
3. Join and bookmark my wikipage